

AlmaTourism N.4, 2011: Elisa Bignante, *Geografia e ricerca visuale. Strumenti e metodi*

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AlmaTourismhomepage: almatourism.cib.unibo.it**Elisa Bignante, *Geografia e ricerca visuale. Strumenti e metodi*, Laterza 2011**Calanca, D.*
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Especially since the eighties and nineties of last century, we have seen a general intensification of disciplinary studies and reflections, as well as interdisciplinary, involving visual search.

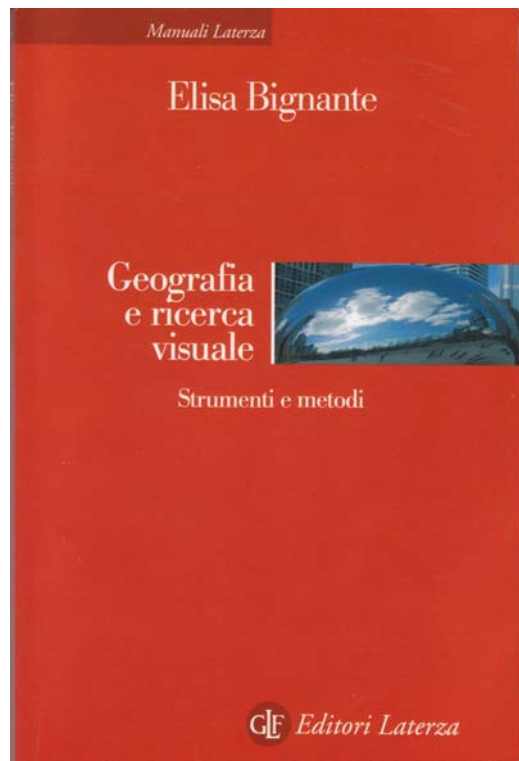
In this sense, in recent decades, in anglo-saxon area has developed a great interest in the visual search methods: they are tools of investigation using different visual materials, such as photographs, videos of different types, diagrams, cognitive maps, chronological tables, film, portraits, maps, video diaries, memories scrapbook, comics and photo-diaries. These tools are conceived as part of the process of knowledge construction. In such a growing interest in visual search, have played a key role in certain currents of thought, including postmodern and post-structuralist thought, which focus on the importance to describe values and aspects of the emotional life of persons, the awareness that writing is not the only form or way to describe the real; phenomenological approach to the study of reality and the spread of social constructionism, that every kind of knowledge is formed and is kept alive through social interactions. The comparison and exchange elapsed between the different disciplines variously involved the use of images in research, led, therefore, to develop a large interdisciplinary reflection on the role of visual analysis in the social sciences and the ways in which lead it.

In particular, with regard to geographers, it is known how they work with visual materials, using maps, diagrams, photographs, films, and how they made a major contribution to the visual search methods through the development of geographic information systems (GIS). However, the prodding to rethink the relationship between the production of space and its representation has led, over the past decade, to the emergence of a debate on the need for a visual turn in cultural geography. That is, an acknowledgment of the opportunity to experiment with new ways to use visual representations in the activity of the geographer. In this direction, has increased the attention within the geographical discipline to survey instruments, widely used in other disciplines, such as anthropology and sociology.

Hence, focusing mainly on the production and analysis of photographs and videos, the volume of Bignante, qualifying in terms of a text on "how to do research" in geography, presents some of these instruments and offers examples of their use specifically in geographical research. And this on the basis that images are an important potential for fostering understanding of structures, dynamics and models of cultural sites. Also because, as stated several times, that of "seeing", is not a neutral or objective act but a selective

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interpretative act of reality. From this point of view, to look and to observe constitute the social practices that are learned. What and how we see depends by the socio-cultural context in which we live and at the same time from our personal history. Photographs and videos produced in a given context are the result of social constructs, created under the influence of certain ideologies: their analysis is a distinctive tool through which we are able to observe and study the reality.



As state the author for a long time, the role played by images and pictures in geography analysis was primarily to produce, through observation, visual descriptions as complete and "scientific" as possible; however, today, geography continues to distance itself from the research of a scientific objectivity in its work and continues to bring into question the possibility of producing definitive and comprehensive descriptions of the world. The reality is continuously transformed in relation to when and how it is described, depending on the look is observed. Today geography assumes that every look in time and space produce his description of a place or a phenomenon, not necessarily coinciding with the previous, subsequent or contemporaneous descriptions given.

In light of these considerations, the question that arises is: how investigating today the geographic space? How to analyze, or re-learn how to look at it? Are these changes in perspective that have led some geographers to reconsider what tools and methodologies can be used in the analysis of the reality around us, answering in this way to the need for a more careful reflection on the use of the images in geography.

In this way, on the one hand, the volume proposes methods of visual analysis through which geography can enrich its investigations, explore different meanings and characters of places; other hand, in the volume is reflected the status of a relationship between geography and visual images, with a long history and at the same time with new prospects in front of it to be defined, in part because the visual search methods are a set of rich composite and evolving tools. In this sense the intense presence and relevance of the images in our society makes them, as a matter of fact, privileged tools to investigate the facts and the phenomena that

unfold in it, following different approaches and different expectations. Considering, then, that the same pictures help to build the way we perceive the reality around us, we can investigate and describe social phenomena through the direct production of visual material. While addressing, primarily for students to deepen their geographical knowledge and skills with new methodological tools, the volume can also be of interest to researchers, local consultants, civil society actors, government officers, and aid workers that intend to approach the use of visual research methods for territorial analysis.
be done for a proper development of the agricultural landscape discipline.